

SERMON

ON

MODERN REVIVALS.

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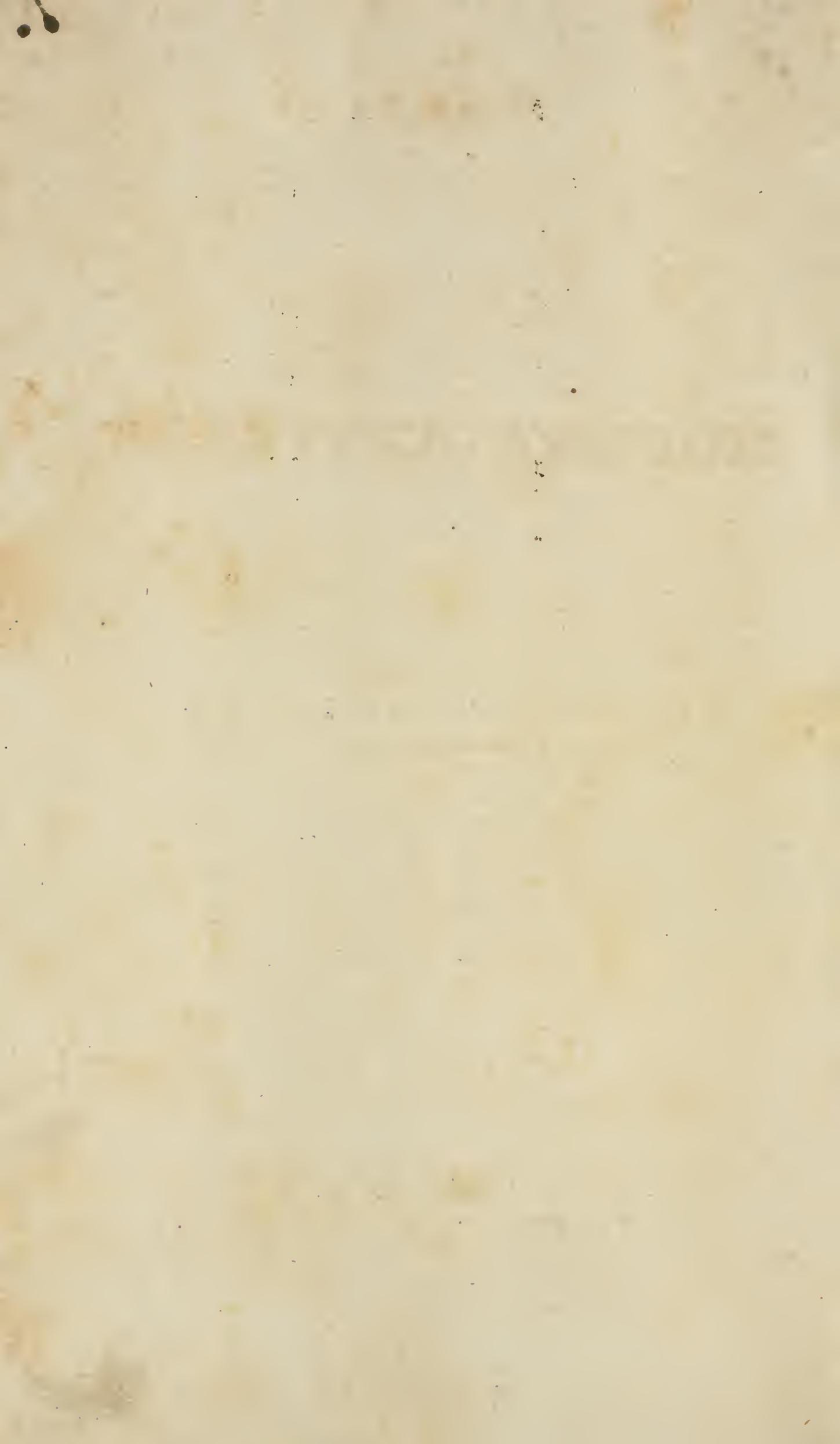
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SERMON,

“For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”—*Romans, x. 2, 3.*

NO proposition is more true than this—that man is naturally a religious being. His mind needs, and as naturally seeks for spiritual food and sustenance, in the all important concerns of religion, as the body needs and seeks for that aliment which nature has provided for its support and strength. And as the body is rather injured than benefitted—rather weakened than strengthened—by partaking of poisonous or unwholesome food, or even by partaking of wholesome food at *improper times*, and in *immoderate* quantities; so the mind is equally liable to be injured by morally poisonous food—by spurious and unwholesome systems of religion—or even by a true system, *badly administered*, or partaken to excess, and at improper times. Poisonous food, either for body or mind, is always pernicious; and good food may be abused and perverted from a blessing to a curse. Heaven never bestowed on man a greater blessing than that of religion; and yet few, if any, of the divine favors have been oftener, or more fatally perverted and abused, either by ignorance or wickedness, or by both.

The Israelites, of whom the author of my text speaks, were a very religious people; yet their religion did not profit themselves or others. They were remarkable for their zeal in the cause of religion; but their zeal was the zeal of ignorance, and their righteousness was of a character very different from the righteousness which was acceptable to God. It consisted mostly in loud pretensions, boisterous declamations, formal rites, affected sanctity, and (if I may so express it,) malignant zeal, to the neglect of the more amiable virtues of social charity and practical godliness. And, my friendly hearers, if I am not very much mistaken, we have many such religionists in the present day. As the evils are many, and the dangers great to society in general, to be apprehended from this pseudo-religion, I desire to draw your very particular attention to the subject and shall introduce as the principal topic of discourse this evening, the subject of modern Revivals of Religion so called.

Without further preamble or introduction, I shall proceed to consider,

1. The manner of producing or getting up these revivals.
2. The manner of conducting and continuing them.
3. The evils resulting from them.
4. Compare them with the practices of the apostles and primitive saints—and conclude with such observations and remarks, as the subject shall naturally suggest.

1. The manner of producing a modern revival. I would here observe in the outset, that a revival of religion, in the modern acceptation of the phrase, cannot occur in any one place, oftener than about once in four or five years, at least not to any considerable extent, without a material or great change of the population.—The reason is obvious—a, the subjects of these excitements are mostly children or youth, and as most of these (who attend on the meetings of the revival classes, and who are not instructed as to the management and motives of the leaders,) are “brought out,” to use one of their favorite phrases, in the time of one revival; a lapse of at least four or five years becomes necessary to bring another set of children and youth to a proper age to be operated on by the measures now to be described.

Whenever a church becomes rather thinly attended; or the preacher unpopular; or internal dissensions prevail, from which it becomes necessary to divert public attention; or the usual lapse of time has transpired, and the preacher thinks it necessary to make some new converts to fill his church and provide himself with supporters against a wet day or old age; the following plan or something similar to it is generally adopted. The minister puts on a very sad and gloomy countenance—is dreadfully oppressed with a sense of his own unfaithfulness—sighs and mourns over the low state of religion in his church, and weeps for the sins of the people, concerning whom he expects to render an account at the bar of God, in eternity. After continuing this affected sadness, mourning and depression for a few days, or perhaps weeks, he then prevails on his deacons or elders to join him in lamentations and wailings, over their own, and the great sins of the people—(not but that the people are as honest, industrious, moral, upright, and charitable, as any people in the world, but)—they are bowed down, for the people, with a load of guilt, of which the latter are entirely unconscious. After this measure has been employed for a few days a church meeting is called, and in secret council the affair is explained to the members generally—they are told of the imperious necessity of getting up a revival, in order to replenish the church—that they must one and all, unite in the measure—affect the same sad and anxious feeling for sinners, that the minister and elders have done, and take hold, in good earnest, to have a revival.

The members consent, and now, forthwith it is reported throughout the town, that an uncommonly interesting time is about to commence—that it is a time of deep anxiety, fasting and prayer, with the church—that God is about to visit the place—that Mr. A. is now quite serious—that Mrs. B. is under conviction—that Miss C. has been seen weeping, and no doubt is entertained that she will soon be “brought out,”—that Master D. has ‘obtained a hope.’—Now, conference meetings, anxious meetings, prayer meetings, inquiry meetings, &c. are appointed for every evening in the week.

A three or four days, meeting is called, and the most flaming and terrific preachers in the neighboring towns, or to be found in the country, are called in to convert sinners—the wonders they have wrought in other places are narrated and exaggerated—many Universalists in such and such places, and one or two preachers of the order, are said to have renounced their soul destroying doctrine, and become christians! The Lord is doing wonders all over the country—all who wish to be converted or go to heaven—all who do not *desire to go to hell*, are exhorted to attend the meetings.—Multitudes now flock to the church—some through fear, others through the influence of friends, and others through a curiosity similar to that which prompts them to visit a caravan of wild animals. The thronged and almost suffocated multitude are then addressed with the most boisterous tone and thundering anathemas, by several of the visiting clergymen in succession. In these addresses, the most horrible descriptions of hell and damnation are dwelt upon—the terrors of an imaginary lake of fire and brimstone are conjured up—hell unzipped—the miserable souls of the damned invoked and called out to tell the torments of that dreadful place—of the worm that never dies and the flames that are never to be quenched—their ceaseless groans and cries are heard—“the flaming wrath of offended justice and incensed omnipotence hangs over these wretched sinners now in this house, and is only stayed for a little season by the entreaties and pleadings of his innocent son—the flames of hell are flashing to devour you—on the other hand, the son of love and the saints of grace are praying for you, and pleading with you, to give up your hearts to God—to lay aside your carnal reason, and comply this moment, before it is forever too late, with the terms of salvation.” At such times the doctrine of particular election and reprobation is entirely forgotten or kept out of sight—nothing is said about eternal decrees—all is represented as depending on the creature—the joys of heaven or torments of hell are suspended on the compliance or non-compliance of every one in this house—this very night—you can all get religion, this moment, if you want it—and if any neglect this opportunity, it is more than probable, that hell will be their portion before morning.

After dwelling on these and similar themes for a length of time, and one half the audience get completely bewildered with thinking of them, a call is then made for those under conviction—the anxious and mourning souls—those who desire the prayers of God's people—who wish for an interest in the supplications of the saints—to come forward to the anxious seats to be prayed for. Then one of the female members of the church, with her veil over her face, and her head bowed down like a bulrush, slowly moves to the anxious seats, prepared for the purpose—“there comes one anxious soul,” cries the minister, “one that is willing to give up her heart to God—are there no more that wish for the prayers of the saints?”

At length another starts and slowly moves on—by and by, another—another prevails on her young daughter, about 14 years old to accompany her—the preacher in the mean time remarking, when any one rises to go, “another poor soul coming—are there no more? do all the rest in this house *wish* to go hell? are there no more who *desire* to go to heaven?” So this manœuvering continues till with the church members and the children and youth that have been, by the combined influence of fear and sympathy, prevailed on to come forward, a considerable number are on the anxious seats. Then commences a course of *agonizing prayer* for these poor convicted sinners—an affectation of much weeping, and strong cries and entreaties to God on their behalf—with expressions like the following: “O, don’t let these sinners perish—don’t let them go down to hell—O Lord, we know they *deserve* eternal *damnation*—that thy *justice* would consign them to the *pit*—but we beseech thee not to deal with them according to their deserts, but snatch them as brands from the burning,” &c.

The farce ends for the night, with a request for all the anxious to attend a prayer meeting next morning at day break, and an intimation that all who do not improve the present moment to get religion and make their peace with God, will undoubtedly “perish, and that everlastingly.” In the mean time report is engaged with her thousand tongues through town, telling what wonders the Lord is doing in the place, (what a profanation of the name of the Lord) how such and such souls are under conviction—have obtained a hope—are anxious or serious, &c. Such an one has renounced Universalism; (though the latter report always turns out to be false if the person named ever was a Universalist;) and thus a great curiosity, or general sympathy, is produced and kept up, to induce many to flock to their future meetings. Anxious meetings are now appointed to be holden in various parts of the town, in the evening—the people assemble in multitudes at school houses and dwelling houses, and after crowding in and filling the apartment full, almost to suffocation, they are permitted to wait in anxious suspense for half or three quarters of an hour, with the room dimly lighted in order to produce gloomy reflections. The minister then enters with a countenance sad as the grave, and with a voice gloomy as death, commences harranguing the assembly about the awful realities of eternity, the dreadful terrors of the approaching judgment, the unending torments, the ceaseless groans and the hopeless despair, of the miserable inhabitants of hell, in the regions of endless woe. One begins to groan on this side, another to sigh on that—one weeps before you, another sobs aloud behind you, till nearly the whole congregation is dissolved in tears: and a person, especially one young in years, attending these meetings, will weep with the rest, merely from the power of sympathy. A person must possess uncommonly strong nerves not to be in some way affected

with such a scene as this, even though the mind is not instructed, the heart improved, nor the understanding enlightened. There are strange and unaccountable feelings that come over the mind—the young are told it is the convicting power and striving operations of the Holy Ghost—that they are undoubtedly “under conviction”—that they must not resist nor quench the spirit. In this state of mind they are kept for a day or two, under the catechetical instruction of their leaders, and having lost their reason and the government of their own minds, they will answer to any question proposed by their guides, exactly as the import of the questions implies they *must* be answered, in order to escape hell—such as “you feel that you are totally depraved? that you deserve to be cast off forever? that it would be just in God, should he doom you to hell? that you are willing to be damned for the glory of God?” &c. to all which, an unqualified “yes” is necessary. After the mind has been kept in this state of darkness, and gloomy and doubting vassalage a sufficient length of time, or till it can endure it no longer, when from its own natural elasticity, it will spring from this to something else, and seize with avidity on any thing that will afford it the least relief, the subjects are then told that they may hope for mercy—that “justice is satisfied with the sufferings of Christ in their stead—they have now been converted, born again, brought out, obtained a hope, got religion, made their peace with God,” &c. &c. And the poor deluded souls *really believe they have*, and congratulate themselves on their marvellous conversion and escape from hell; when in fact no effect has been produced on them but the bewildering of their minds, and an affection of the *animal passions*, principally that of *fear*.

Such are the means resorted to, and such the *modus operandi*, in getting up or producing a modern revival. Having described them as far as is necessary to give you a distinct idea of the plan of operations, and as far as opportunity will now permit, I pass to consider

II. The manner of continuing and conducting these revivals after they have once been started.

The means employed for this purpose are generally the same, and the manner of applying them similar, with what have already been described, with the addition of many other *parts* in the *performance*. Such as ringing the church bell for prayer every morning at day break, to let the community know that the saints are engaged and uncommonly pious; the telling at every meeting some account of remarkable conversions in other places; of the wonders that are being wrought around them; of the conviction and conversion of one, two, or more Universalists; (for it should be recollected they put a much higher value on converts from Universalism than on any others—though they are careful not to mention their names or tell where they reside:) the frequent and gen-

eral distribution of tracts filled with the most alarming descriptions of hell and damnation; the appointing of committees to go through the village or town to visit every family, to prevail on them to attend *their* meetings, to frighten modest women and timid children with the idea that they are going directly to hell unless they get religion immediately; (taking special care, if the husband, the father, or master of the family is not a member of their church, to pay their visits in *his absence*, lest they might be rebuked for their impudence,) the attacking of persons, both acquaintances and strangers, as they meet them in the streets, and abruptly commencing conversation on the subject of religion, asking them if they are christians, if they have got religion, or made their peace with God, and telling them they are in the broad road to ruin; assailing unprotected females in a similar manner, particularly hired girls, (who frequently are far from their friends, and have none to plead their cause or defend them from such assaults,) and telling them that getting religion and joining their church is the only way in which they can secure a standing in society in this world, or escape from hell in the next; the singling out of particular persons, and calling them by name in public prayer; the separating of the saints from the sinners, or professors from non professors, into different groups in the same room, or into different apartments in the same building, to represent *dramatically*, the awful separation which they say is to take place in another world; the preaching much against Universalism, caricaturing and misrepresenting its doctrines and slandering its abettors.

These means and measures, with others similar, too numerous to narrate, are employed, in conducting a modern revival, till at length the flame wastes itself with its own brilliancy, and the inflammable combustibles are all consumed; when the community awakes from its slumbers, and sets the seal of reprobation on such raging fanaticism—till the “tired nature” of the actors themselves “seeks repose” in a suspension of its operations for a season, till it can re-gather its strength for renewing the crusade. But alas! it “seeketh rest and findeth none” for now in fact, and not till now, “comes the tug of war”—the business of proselyting and getting the new converts into the particular church desired. This is often a very difficult and doubtful work. Though many of the young converts, whose parents are members of the popular church, will join that where their parents belong, as a matter of course; yet there are a number who wish to join the Methodists, because they cannot see into the doctrine of election and reprobation; (which begins now to be cautiously and insidiously brought to view by the Presbyterian preacher;) whereas the Methodists hold to the doctrine of a free salvation. They are told the Methodists are very unpopular, a very enthusiastic sect, (!) denying some doctrines which we hold as fundamental—“you had better join our church.”

A number more wish to join the Baptist church, believing baptism by immersion the only gospel and apostolic mode of administering that ordinance. "Why, surely you won't join the Baptists—how can you unite with a church where they hold to close communion? Besides, our church, (the Presbyterian) is the most popular—you will get the most friends and the most patronage and support in business by joining our church." Thus there is a pulling and hauling in all directions, among the different sects, to prevail on the new converts to join their church. At length, after joining different churches, these loving converts, who were so harmonious a few days since, are now all by the ears, filled with the bitterness of sectarian rancor towards each other.

Many join the church under the influence of those excited feelings with which they were first "brought out;" being incapacitated to judge for themselves, they take on trust, whatever is held up to them for credence. Some of these, when the excitement of passion has passed off, begin to suspect they have deceived themselves with unreal hopes—that they have, in fact, never known any thing about true religion—they no longer have those feelings they did when they first came out; and hence fall into a gloomy and desponding state of mind—a settled melancholy, which not unfrequently lasts for life. Others, instead of supposing they have deceived themselves, suspect they have been imposed on by their guides—they feel their vassalage; but as they have joined the church, they dare not whisper their suspicions, nor examine boldly into the matter, lest they should be suspected of heresy, and be called on to pass the fiery ordeal of church discipline and the thunders of excommunication—so they continue in bondage through life, wishing all the time they had not been thus precipitate. Others still there are, who, discovering the imposition that has been practiced on them, and being disgusted with every thing that bears the name of resemblance of it, break loose from all restraint, become callous to every refined, moral, and religious feeling, and relapse into immorality, vice, and open profligacy, becoming far worse than they ever were before, or ever otherwise would have been. If occasionally one of the new converts, discovering the duplicity that has been practised in proselyting, discards all human authority and man made creeds, takes the bible as his only guide, and after thoroughly examining its contents, comes out a bright and happy Universalist, he is at once put down as an enemy of true religion, by his former associates, and pursued with anathemas and reproaches.

At length after all the proselyting is accomplished that can be effected—after the winter season is passed away, and the spring has opened, when the farmer begins the cultivation of his fields, the mechanic pursues his honest calling, the merchant his trading, and professional men their various avocations, and community in general resume their business and their reason—it is seen that the re-

vival has ended. Rational men now look back, and seeing where the flame was, that the ground is much blacker than it was before it was burnt over, wonder within themselves that they could ever have been so deceived as to think such a transaction the work of the Lord! They will observe too, with regret and sorrow, what I propose now briefly to notice.

III. The evils resulting from modern revivals.

I am not disposed to deny that there are particular instances in which some good may result, either directly or indirectly, from modern revivals, as they are generally conducted—some few instances doubtless occur, of individuals being arrested in a sinful career, and living subsequently through life, more sober, upright, honest and religious lives; but these instances I believe are “few and far between.” And the positive and undeniable evils resulting from them are so great and so numerous, that the good cannot begin to compare with the evil. Nor am I alone in this opinion—the same is the opinion of many great, and good, and even Orthodox men. The same was the opinion of the very fathers and predecessors of those who are now the principal instruments in getting up and carrying them on. Forty years ago the whole of the Presbyterian and Congregational denominations condemned them in the most unqualified manner, calling them the work of ignorant and misguided enthusiasts, and ranting fanatics, and sometimes even giving them the appellation of “the works of the Devil.” Dr. Beecher, of Boston, about four years since, said these revivals would “soon become one of the most powerful and successful assaults which Satan ever made in the church.” He pronounced them a “scourge,” leading to “universal misrule and moral desolation.” A convention of Presbyterian ministers, assembled at New Lebanon, in this State, between three and four years since, voted, or resolved unanimously, that “there may be so much human infirmity, and indiscretion, and wickedness of men, in conducting a revival of religion, as to render the general evils which flow from this infirmity, indiscretion, and wickedness of man, GREATER than the temporary *advantages* of the revival.” And I am fully persuaded that this proves to be the case in ninety nine instances out of a hundred, of modern revivals. The following may be classed among some of the most prominent evils of which I speak:

1. Uncharitableness and bitterness of feeling in society. The means employed and manner of bringing about one of these revivals, are exactly such as are calculated to engender and foster a sort of spiritual pride to puff up the subjects with the idea that they have become much *better* than others, that hence they are a privileged class—that they have a right to dogmatize and dictate to others; they assume the prerogative to condemn all others that do not come up to their standard; their impudence is almost unbounded; and this impudence and overbearing spirit, and dictatorial style of

*The phrase was never heard
until after the revival of 1800*

theirs often provokes others to nearly as great uncharitableness towards them; and the greatest bitterness and acrimony of feeling is often produced between husband and wife, parents and children, neighbors and friends, alienating their hearts and dividing their affections; and multitudes of religious gossips are constantly on the wing to bear evil reports from one to the other, thus widening the breach which religion should heal. A systematic espionage is kept up to ascertain whether this, that, or the other person attends an orthodox or heterodox meeting, to overawe and intimidate the weak into abject submission: and proscription and non-intercourse in business is proclaimed against all who will not countenance these modern innovators, and attend and support their meetings.

2. A superstitious regard to non-essentials, professions, forms, ceremonies, &c. to the neglect of weightier matters, known duties, and positive commands. Great stress is laid on external forms, and attendance on multitudes of public meetings; insomuch that whole weeks and even months are spent in nothing else than running from house to house and from meeting to meeting, to talk about convictions and conversions, and warn people to repent and "get religion," whose moral character is far better than their own; while industry is neglected, domestic duties disregarded, and charity and mercy to the poor and distressed forgotten. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness." "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy bodies, speaking things which they ought not." 1 Tim. v. 13. Again, says the same apostle, "there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies." Again, "of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women," &c. And again, "if any provide not for his own, and especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." St. James says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Alas, how few of the movers or subjects of modern revivals, who bridle their own tongues, or but what "deceive their own hearts!" And how great a tax is it, especially for the poor, to spend so much time as their leaders tell them they must, in order to get to heaven, besides the tithing on mint, anise and cummin, while yet the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith, are neglected! their children clothed in tatter, or their neighbors famishing for bread.

3. Another evil, and one too of no ordinary magnitude, is the gloomy and desponding state of mind in which some, at least, of the unhappy subjects of a revival, are left, in almost or quite every instance—a state of settled melancholy for life, or else terminating in absolute despair, mental insanity, and not unfrequently in suicide. I have often wondered, considering the terrific and dreadful means

employed in a modern revival that instances of insanity and suicide were not more frequent than they are. Still they are sufficiently frequent to show the evil tendency and fatal consequences of those popular excitements. The instances where melancholy and despondency for life are the result, are innumerable.

4. The increase of infidelity. No truth is more certain in my mind, than that modern revivals promote infidelity—Deism and Atheism. Multitudes who do not give themselves the trouble to examine the bible for themselves, and to see what Christianity is, or what it was as taught by its great author, and his immediate apostles—who take it for granted that what they hear and see in the doctrines and practices of professing Christians, in the time of a revival, is christianity itself, are shocked with its absurdity and ridiculousness; and say at once, that as reasonable men, they cannot believe such a system could ever originate with God—they cannot believe such practices can be pleasing to divinity or profitable to humanity; and hence they reject the whole as unworthy the least regard. And I verily believe these revivals are doing more to spread and encourage infidelity, than all the writings of Paine, Bolingbroke, Hume, Spinoza, Voltaire, Rosseau, Volney, and all the long catalogue of Deistical and Atheistical writers, who have ever written against Christianity. I solemnly aver before Heaven and earth that this is my full conviction and deliberate judgment. I pass

IV. To compare these revivals with the practices of the apostles and primitive saints.

What, let me ask, friendly hearers, do we discover in these modern revivals, that resembles the preaching or practices of the immediate followers of our blessed Saviour? Did Jesus or his apostles ever resort to any such means to get up a revival of religion as we now see employed? No: never. True, they warned mankind to flee from sin—to live soberly, righteously, and godly—they brought home to their consciences and hearts the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the consequences of living in the practice of iniquity. But never did they clothe the father of all mercies in such garments of wrath and vindictive cruelty. Never did they preach the doctrine of unending torments for any of the human family.—The drift of their preaching was to shew that God is love, and to inspire confidence in man towards his maker. True, our Saviour foretold his disciples and forewarned the unbelieving Jews, of the punishment of Gehenna, that that adulterous and wicked generation should suffer. But as they were Jews, and perfectly understood the meaning of the word Gehenna, (which our translators have rendered hell,) both in its literal and metaphorical sense, they well knew how to apply those threatenings, and that too consistently with the divine promises of universal peace and happiness.—But never were the Gentiles threatened with Gehenna punishment. Never did the apostles use the word at all in their preach-

ing. When Paul was converted, nothing like the doctrine of total depravity, election and reprobation, or endless misery, seems to have been preached to, or understood by him. All was mildness, mercy, and compassion. When the eunuch was converted under the preaching of Philip, no wrath of an angry and offended God, was proclaimed—no terrors assailed him—no questions were asked whether he saw that it would be just in God to cast him off forever and doom his soul to hell—whether he was willing to be damned for the glory of God—whether he saw that his heart was totally depraved and infinitely criminal. He says, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” It was enough—he was baptized and went on his way rejoicing—not mourning in bitter agony of soul, as many do in these days.

On the day of Pentacost—that day of faithful and true apostolic preaching—when three thousand souls were born into the kingdom—not a syllable seems to have been uttered, not a word dropped about the torments of hell and damnation—the goodness and abundant mercy of God, sent home to the consciences of the hearers, pricked them in their hearts at the idea of having sinned against so kind and gracious a Being—they are persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, and bow rejoicing to the sceptre of his kingdom. To the very murderers of the Prince of Peace, the apostle Peter preaches (Acts iii.) the doctrine of “the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” And trace the history of the acts and preaching of the Apostles through, from beginning to end, nothing can be found in all their labors that in the least resembles a modern revival, either in the doctrines preached, or the effects on the hearers, or the practices pursued.

Christianity, as exhibited in the New Testament, and exemplified in the lives of the apostles, is seen to represent the Deity in the most amiable light, and proves itself infinitely worthy of God as its author, of Christ as its medium of communication to men, and of the everlasting joy, gratitude and obedience of mankind.

In conclusion, I observe, what I have said on this subject has been said with a full conviction of its truth a verity, and from a sense of duty I owe to you, to the public in general, to my own conscience, and to that God who has put me into the ministry of reconciliation, and placed me as a watchman on the walls of Zion. I ask you then to examine, and carefully weigh, and prayerfully consider what has been said, and let the subject be fully and faithfully canvassed. If you are fully satisfied that modern revivals are the work of crafty and designing men, instead of being the work of God—that they are deeply injurious to the peace and happiness of mankind and the cause of pure and undefiled religion, set your faces steadfastly against them, and let not the wrath and denunciations of their abettors intimidate nor drive you from your

duty. But in opposing them, do it with mildness and kindness to the deluded victims of folly and fanaticism. Use persuasion and reasonable arguments with your families, connexions, neighbors, and friends—endeavor to convince them of the evils resulting from these popular excitements. Though we cannot but look upon some of the principal *leaders* in these measures, as exceedingly criminal in their plans and operations, we are bound in christian charity to look upon the great body of their abettors and votaries, as honest and sincere, but deceived and deluded souls, who “have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,” who “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness,” may really suppose, all the while, that they are “doing God service.” This, however, renders not the general evils to society less pernicious or dangerous—they are to be deprecated, and a remedy sought in the good sense of an enlightened public.

But my friends, may you, one and all, be able to discern between true and false religion, between pure Christianity, and its miserable counterfeit. And never despise religion, nor reject it, because of its abuse to others. True religion is a reasonable thing—all of its doctrines are rational and consistent, and its duties such as to render its possessor happy in their performance. It is in fact the greatest blessing that Heaven in mercy has ever bestowed on man.

“Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith by treacherous art,
I’ll call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.”

No person would rejoice more sincerely than your speaker, in a *general revival* of “*pure religion*, and undefiled, before God, our Father,” whose practical duties are, “to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world.” May God grant that such a revival may commence, and progress, and become universal, and finally supplant all spurious revivals, stay the folly and wickedness of man in getting up boisterous excitements of the animal passions, producing fanaticism and madness, without improving the heart or mending the morals.—And may you, my friendly hearers, manifest by a well ordered life and godly conversation, the fruits of genuine and practical religion. Let your light shine before men, and shew forth out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, your works of charity in meekness and wisdom; that the world may know you are influenced in the performance of your duty by a nobler motive than the fear of an endless hell—even that the love of God reigns in and rules over you. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.”